



## **Reproductive choice among HIV positive women in Northern Vietnam**

### **The availability of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) has contributed to a reduction of induced abortion among HIV positive women in Northern Vietnam**

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The aim of this study was to explore the decision of induced abortion among HIV positive women in Quang Ninh and Hai Phong provinces in northern Vietnam and examine how the decision is associated with socio-economic characteristics and the availability of comprehensive PMTCT programmes.

- While many HIV-positive pregnant women have a strong desire to have a child, they often opt for abortion out of fear that they cannot fulfill their responsibilities as mothers.
- Having an induced abortion after HIV diagnosis was associated with the profile of women aged 30 or more, being small traders or independent laborers and diagnosed with HIV in 2004 or earlier.
- Kinship roles and relations play a key role in difficult reproductive decisions.

#### **Findings**

##### **A reproductive dilemma**

Despite their strong desire to have a child, 13 of the 20 women who participated in the qualitative study decided to terminate their pregnancy. They faced the dilemma of having strong desires for motherhood and the impossibility of mothering. Mothering, according to their opinions meant taking on a large responsibility for bringing up and educating their child. They believed that they should not have a child if they could not rear it as no one can replace a mother's care for her children, not even other family members. Moreover, they did not want their child to become a burden to their family if they died because the family already lacked economic resources and their parents were growing old.

##### **Socio-economic characteristics**

In this study, women aged 30 or above were five times more likely to have an induced abortion than those under 30. Women, who were petty traders and independent laborers were four times more likely to have an induced abortion in comparison with housewives. Those diagnosed with HIV before the availability of PMTCT programs were three times more likely to experience an induced abortion than those diagnosed after.

##### **Pregnancy decision-making**

Many women in this study experienced a complex and difficult decision-making process. It is not simply the women's "own" or "others" decision. The women either stated that they complied with their husbands, parents or parents-in-law when deciding whether to have an abortion or stay pregnant. Or claimed that they made their own decisions; but they did always consult significant others before any decision was made.

#### **Publications**

**Contraceptive use among HIV-positive women in Ha Long city and Cam Pha town, Quang Ninh province of Vietnam.** Bui Kim Chi, Tine Gammeltoft, Vibeke Rasch. (submitted)  
**Induced abortion among HIV positive women in Northern Vietnam: Exploring reproductive dilemmas.** *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Volume 12, Supplement 1, pp: S41-S54 Bui Kim Chi, Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh, Vibeke Rasch, Tine Gammeltoft (2009).

**Induced abortion among HIV positive women in Quang Ninh and Hai Phong, Vietnam.** *Tropical Medicine & International Health*. Volume 15, Issue 10, pp: 1172-1178 Bui Kim Chi, Tine Gammeltoft, Nguyen Thi Thu Nam, Vibeke Rasch.

**Pregnancy decision-making among HIV positive women in Northern Vietnam: Reconsidering reproductive choice** (under second peer review) Bui Kim Chi, Vibeke Rasch, Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh, Tine Gammeltoft.

#### **Recommendations**

- Women should have a free access to PMTCT programs at the early stage of HIV infection in order to facilitate them to make an informed reproductive choice.
- Health care providers should take into account the socio-cultural context that shapes women's reproductive desires and enter into constructive dialogues with women about their fears regarding the future and about possible ways of addressing their concerns.
- Family members should be involved in the counseling to facilitate women's decision-making and helping them to cope with the challenges they face and to envision alternative ways to become "good enough mothers" if they opt to keep the pregnancy.

#### **Partners**

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